

Waste Reduction at Retail Stores

The Potential

Retail stores have the opportunity to control large amounts of highly recyclable and reusable materials such as paper, cardboard, and beverage containers. Plastics in this category include polystyrene packing “peanuts” and plastic films (shrink wraps and bags). Retailers can educate customers and employees about waste reduction by promoting waste prevention through advertising campaigns and by putting out recycling containers. Retailers can also save money by observing the “three Rs”: reduce, reuse, and recycle.

Reduce

The greatest opportunity for waste reduction at retail stores is packaging. Retailers can reduce waste and can often save money by following these packaging guidelines:

1. Give your customers the choice of whether or not they want their purchase bagged. Offer a discount to customers who bring their own bag.
2. Minimize the amount of packaging you use.
3. Work with your suppliers and vendors and ask them to provide items with less packaging. Ask your suppliers and vendors to eliminate packaging altogether, if possible. Ask them to provide packaging materials that are either refillable or reusable. For example, retail stores can reuse certain packaging materials such as cardboard and polystyrene packing “peanuts.”
4. Use packaging that is recyclable and is made with recycled materials. To the greatest extent possible, recycled content should be composed of postconsumer recycled waste material; that is, material that has served its intended use and has been discarded by a business or consumer.

(Manufacturing processes generate recyclable waste material; however, eliminating this waste completely is preferable to recycling it.)

Reuse

When you pack items for customers, reuse packaging material supplied to you by your suppliers and vendors. Donate old and outdated merchandise to charities rather than throwing it in the trash. Store remodeling produces construction and demolition debris in large amounts from time to time.

Other stores, schools, churches, and community organizations can reuse many of these materials. All your reusable and recyclable material can be listed for free in a materials exchange such as CalMAX, the California Materials Exchange. Materials exchanges help businesses and institutions find markets for materials they have traditionally discarded.

For more information about CalMAX, contact 1-877-520-9703, calmax@ciwmb.ca.gov, or www.ciwmb.ca.gov/CalMAX/.

For other reuse resources, see the Reuse Web site at www.ciwmb.ca.gov/Reuse/.

Recycle

Retail stores can reduce disposal costs and sometimes earn revenue from the sale of separated recyclables. Estimate the amount of recyclable materials your store produces and arrange to have it picked up by a waste hauler or recycler listed in a telephone directory or on the Internet. Ask these questions when looking for a vendor to pick up your recyclables:

- What materials does the vendor accept?
- How should the materials be separated?
- Is there a minimum amount required for a pickup?
- Do they charge for pickup?
- Will the vendor pay for the recyclables?

- Will the vendor assist with education of your staff? Will the vendor supply recycling containers to use throughout the workplace and large bins for the main storage area?
- How will pickups be arranged? Scheduled? On-call?
- Does the vendor offer shredding services for confidential materials?
- Does the vendor have references?

Choose appropriate recycling containers. The size and style of recycling equipment varies. Many vendors will supply a variety of small-size containers for business recycling programs, and nearly all provide and service the larger storage dumpsters. You may wish to purchase your own personalized recycling bins with your company's logo or convert an existing trash container into a recycling container. Many recycling containers are made of recycled materials, so purchase and use this type whenever possible.

Place recycling bins strategically and label them clearly. Place recycling bins in all heavy traffic areas, common work areas, and most importantly, in locations where recyclables are typically generated.

The California Integrated Waste Management Board provides free posters and signs to help you reduce, reuse, recycle, and buy recycled. See www.ciwmb.ca.gov/Bizwaste/Posters/. This site also includes a list of waste prevention resources for businesses. Also see www.ciwmb.ca.gov/WPW/.

Buy Recycled Products

By both recycling material that comes to you and purchasing and using products made with recycled materials, you are "closing the recycling loop." There are many recycled products available, including office paper products, tissue paper products, plastic landscaping "timbers," insulation, packaging materials, and ceiling, wall, and floor tiles. Ask your suppliers and contractors to make these products available to you. Find products made from recycled material with the recycled content product directory at www.ciwmb.ca.gov/RCP/.

Malls

Mall property managers and anchor stores can provide leadership by coordinating waste prevention, recycling, and purchasing programs at multi-tenant complexes. Mall managers can consolidate efforts among businesses to generate large amounts of recyclable material, thereby making recycling more profitable.

Success Stories

For examples of companies who are successfully incorporating waste reduction into daily business, see the Waste Reduction Award Program (WRAP) at www.ciwmb.ca.gov/WRAP/.

Additional Resources

For detailed guidelines on how to assess waste reduction opportunities in your business, see "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, It's Good Business! A Guide for California Businesses," CIWMB publication #500-94-004 (print).

For ideas on reducing packaging, see "Preferred Packaging Procurement Guidelines," CIWMB publication #500-94-023 (print).

Other CIWMB publications are available online at www.ciwmb.ca.gov/Publications/. To order printed publications, call 1-800-CA-WASTE (in California) or (916) 341-6306, or write:

CIWMB
Publications Clearinghouse (MS-6)
P.O. Box 4025
Sacramento, CA 94812-4025

For assistance with any of the above, call (916) 341-6363.

The energy challenge facing California is real. Every Californian needs to take immediate action to reduce energy consumption. For a list of simple ways you can reduce demand and cut your energy costs, Flex Your Power and visit www.consumerenergycenter.org/flex/index.html.